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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

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This issue of *MassBenchmarks* arrives in the wake of a historic national election and during a period of considerable economic and political uncertainty both here in Massachusetts, across the nation, and around the world. It reminds us that the Commonwealth has much work to do and is sorely in need of critical investments in our people, our physical infrastructure, and our urban communities.

As always, the issue opens with an assessment of the current conditions in the state economy, this time co-authored by Northeastern University Professor Alan Clayton-Matthews and UMass Amherst Professor Robert Nakosteen. They carefully review current data and make it clear that the overall economic performance of our Commonwealth continues to be relatively strong, while there are some challenges to continued growth.

The issue's first feature article takes an in-depth look at one of the most significant policy challenges facing our state — the need for increased housing production, especially of units that are affordable to working families. Authored by Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) analysts Tim Reardon, Meghna Hari, and Jessie Partridge, this eye-opening analysis reminds us of the daunting challenges we face when it comes to producing enough housing and well-paying jobs to support our growing economy during a period of major demographic transition.

The second feature article takes a hard look at critical state investments in the small to mid-size urban communities of Massachusetts, now commonly referred to as Gateway Cities. In this important piece, consultant and UMass Donahue Institute alumnus Dan Hodge and MassInc's Benjamin Forman review the recent history of state capital investments in urban Massachusetts. They argue for a more strategic approach to these investments.

The issue concludes with a sobering assessment of how state capital spending in the New England region lags that of states in other areas of the country. Excerpted from a recent report published by the New England Public Policy Center (NEPPC) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, and authored by Michigan State Professor Ronald Fisher and the NEPPC's Riley Sullivan, it documents that we are not keeping pace with the rest of the nation when it comes to investing in our physical infrastructure and public facilities.

The insights contained in this issue of *MassBenchmarks* provide critical information that should help inform the state's political, business and labor leaders as they work together to craft effective solutions to the many challenges facing our Commonwealth. This will require some difficult decisions. As the *MassBenchmarks* Board of Editors noted in their latest assessment of state economic conditions, doing so will require taking the steps necessary to increase the level of state investment "to meet urgent unmet educational needs." But make no mistake, as they conclude, "Continuing to ensure that Massachusetts has the skilled labor and infrastructure demanded by the contemporary global economy, wise investments in the capacity of our people and institutions represent genuine opportunities to position the Commonwealth for continued success and prosperity for the foreseeable future."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin T. Meehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martin T. Meehan, President  
University of Massachusetts